

## Measuring Up 2004 The Idaho Report Card on Higher Education

The national report card for higher education, Measuring Up 2004, is published biennially. Its purpose is to provide the public and policymakers with the information to assess and to improve postsecondary education in each state. The report evaluates each state on its performance because it is primarily the state that is responsible for educational access and quality in the United States. The report card grades each state in six overall performance categories: preparation, participation, affordability, completion, benefits, and learning. The report compares the state's results with its own performance a decade ago.

Summaries of the six categories:

### Preparation [Grade = C]

Over the past decade, Idaho has shown notable improvement in preparing students to succeed in college.

- The proportions of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders taking and scoring well on Advanced Placement exams have more than doubled over the past decade, although the state's current performance on this measure is very low compared with other states.
- Among young adults, 9 percent receive a General Education Development (GED) diploma rather than a high school diploma, one of the highest percentages in the nation.
- About 17% of children under age 18 live in poverty, which matches the national rate.

### Participation [Grade C-]

Idaho has made no notable progress in enrolling students in higher education over the past decade.

- Compared with other states, the chance of Idaho high school students enrolling in college by age 19 is low, because few students graduate from high school and enroll in college.
- Over the past decade, the chance of enrolling in college by age 19, thirty four percent, has declined by 13 percent, compared with a national decline of 3 percent.
- A very low percentage of working-age adults (age 25-49) are enrolled part-time in college-education or training.
- Over the past decade, the percentage of working-age adults who are enrolled part-time in college-level education or training has declined by 13 percent, compared with a nationwide decline of 11 percent.
- In Idaho, 91 more students are leaving the state than are entering to attend college. About 24 percent of Idaho high school graduates who go to college attend college out of state.

### Affordability [Grade D-]

Idaho, over the past decade, has made no notable progress in providing affordable higher education opportunities.

- Compared with best-performing states, families in Idaho devote a fairly large share of family income, even after financial aid, to attend public four-year

colleges and universities, which enroll over 60 percent of college students in the state.

- Idaho's investment in need-based financial aid is very low when compared with top-performing states, and the state does not offer low-priced college opportunities.
- Undergraduate students borrowed on average \$3,044 in 2003.
- Those who are striving to reach or stay in the middle class—the 40 percent of the population with the lowest incomes – earn on average \$19,348 each year.
- Forty percent of the population with the lowest income would need to invest 31 percent of the family income to pay net college costs [tuition, room and board minus financial aid received equals net college cost].
- The lowest quintile (20 percent) of the population with the lowest income (average \$12,264) would need to contribute 46 percent of the family income to pay net college costs.

#### Completion [Grade = C+]

Over the past decade, Idaho has improved substantially in the proportion of students earning a certificate or degree in a timely manner.

- Compared with other states, a fairly large percentage (65%) of freshmen at four-year colleges and universities return for their sophomore year.
- However, a small percentage of first-time, full-time college students complete a bachelor's degree within six years of entering college.

#### Benefits [Grade = C]

Over the past decade, Idaho has improved notably in the benefits it reaps from having a more highly education population.

- Compared with other states, the proportion of residents who have a bachelor's degree is low, and this substantially weakens the state economy.
- Whites are more than twice as likely as those from minority ethnic groups to have a bachelor's degree. This is among the widest gaps in the country on this measure.
- If all ethnic groups had the same educational attainment and earnings as whites, total personal income in the state would be about \$247 million higher, and the state would realize an estimated \$86 million in additional tax revenues.

#### Learning [Grade = Incomplete]

Like most states, Idaho received an Incomplete because there are no comparable data that would allow for meaningful state-by-state comparisons in learning. Five states (Illinois, Kentucky, Nevada, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) have developed learning measures through their participation in a national demonstration project conducted by the National Forum on College-Level Learning (funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts).

The growth of Idaho's high school population creates a serious need for the state to continue to improve the preparation of students for college and to provide ample college spaces and classes for these incoming students. The high cost of attending public four-year colleges for low- and middle-income students represents an additional challenge in maintaining college opportunities.



### Policy Questions

- Can the state use financial aid programs more effectively to meet the needs of students from low-income families?
- Can Idaho create a low-priced option to ensure that higher education is accessible and affordable to its residents?
- Can higher education build upon partnerships with K-12 schools to improve student achievement and preparation for college?
- Considering Idaho's improving performance in preparing students for higher education, can the state encourage more high school students to enroll in higher education?
- At the same time, can Idaho provide college opportunities for the increasing numbers of high school students expected to graduate and enroll in college?
- Can Idaho provide more opportunities for working-age adults to enroll in higher education?
- Does the state have adequate assessment measures to determine the effectiveness of its financial aid opportunities?

The full report is available to [www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org)